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BACTERIOLOGICAL, PHYSIOLOGICAL, ETC.

Toxicity of Cacao Shell. Marchadier and Goujon. (*Ann. Falsific.*, 1919, **12**, 283-287.)—Several French Army horses died after being fed with cacao shell and cacao shell powder in place of oats. The animals received 1·5 kilos. of the substance per day for four days before their death. Since cacao shell may contain up to 0·9 per cent. of total alkaloids (caffeine and theobromine), the horses may have taken

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daily some 13 grms. of alkaloid, or over 50 grms. in all. The animals undoubtedly died as the result of alkaloidal poisoning. It is considered that cacao shell is a dangerous fodder; if the alkaloids are extracted previously, the cacao shell loses its food value owing to the simultaneous removal of other extractives. W. P. S.

Detection of Hydrocyanic Acid in Cases of Poisoning. L. Chelle. (*Comptes rend.*, 1919, **169**, 852-854.)—It has long been known that hydrocyanic acid cannot be detected in the organs of the body a short time after death. Experiments described in detail show that this is due not to the disappearance of the hydrocyanic acid, but to its fixation by the sulphur compounds produced during cadaveric putrefaction and its conversion into thiocyanic acid. This acid remains in the residue when the finely divided material is distilled with water and phosphoric acid to separate hydrocyanic acid, and the latter may be quantitatively recovered by treating the residue with a suitable oxidising agent such as sulpho-chromic acid. Further experiments have shown that thiocyanic acid is not formed in the ordinary process of putrefaction. C. A. M.